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ABSTRACT

Three studies are presented in support of a parsimonious interpretation of Fiedler's Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) Scale which has been consistently related to leader effectiveness. Two of the studies found that undergraduate psychology students who scored higher on the LPC scale expressed a more optimistic view of human nature. A field study then found that park employees who scored higher on the LPC scale were more willing to endorse park policies permitting increased personal freedom for youngsters in parks. These findings support an interpretation of LPC as a personality construct based upon confidence in human nature. (Author)

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Correlates of Fiedler Scores and Leadership Style

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Three studies are presented in support of a parsimonious interpretation of Fiedler's LPC scale which has been related consistently to leader effectiveness. One of the studies found that undergraduate psychology students who scored higher on the LPC scale expressed a more optimistic view of human nature. A field study found that path employees who scored higher on the LPC scale were more willing to endorse path policies permitting increased personal freedom for youngsters in prison. These findings supported an interpretation of LPC as a personality construct based upon confidence in human nature.

KEY WORDS	LINK A		LINK B		LINK C	
	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT
Conference on Human Factors						
Machiavellianism						
Least Preferred Coworker (LPC)						
Leadership						
Contingency Model						

CONSTANCY IN LEADER BEHAVIOR AND LEADERSHIP STYLE[1]

Norbert M. Bradbury and Fred E. Fiedler

The Least Preferred Coworker Score (LPC) has been shown to be related systematically to supervisor effectiveness in a wide range of settings (Fiedler, 1967, 1971). The consistency of Fiedler's findings has prompted reviewers to consider his Contingency Model of leadership effectiveness to be the most important development in leadership theory in the past decade (Korman, 1970), and to hold promise of definition in a field "heavy in research, but lacking in theory (p. 301)" (Shaw & Constanzo, 1970). Fiedler's theory seeks to explain group effectiveness in terms of a model which incorporates both leadership style and the favorableness of the situation in which the leader is working (Fiedler, 1967).

The LPC scale is a reliable and easily administered series of bipolar adjective differential items on which the subject is asked to describe the person with whom he has had the most difficulty working. Someone who describes his least preferred coworker in relatively positive terms is considered a high LPC and one who describes his least preferred coworker in relatively negative terms is considered a low LPC.

However, a clear understanding of LPC as a personality variable has not been established (Fiedler, 1967, 1971). This has been an extremely perplexing problem, especially when one considers the consistency with which

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LPC has been related to group performance. Over the past 15 years a number of substantial attempts to explain LPC have been made. LPC has been explained most often as a measure of the task and relationship orientation of a leader (Fiedler, 1967), alternatively as the cognitive complexity of the leader (Mitchell, 1970), and most recently as an index of the motivational hierarchy of the leader (Fiedler, 1972). Many other possible explanations have been considered and discarded for lack of support. Attempts to relate LPC to over 65 other personality and biographical variables have been almost totally unsuccessful (Fiedler, 1967, 1972). Mitchell (1970) found a positive relationship between LPC and cognitive complexity. It was, however, too small to support an extensive reinterpretation of the meaning of leadership style as measured by LPC.

It is not the intention of this paper to offer a complete discussion of the three major interpretations of LPC listed above. Suffice it to say that the interpretation of the LPC score as a measure of task-relationship orientation (i.e., high-LPC subjects are relationship-oriented and low-LPC subjects are task-oriented) has received neither theoretical nor empirical support. It is theoretically impossible for a unidimensional scale score such as LPC to be related strongly to two orthogonally constructed factor scores of another scale. The interpretation of LPC as a task-relationship orientation would require such relationships. It was, in fact, evidence inconsistent with this interpretation which led to the development of the motivational hierarchy interpretation of LPC (Fiedler, 1972).

The most recent interpretation of the LPC score as reflecting a motivational hierarchy is an a posteriori explanation that was developed

to account for data on leader behavior and LPC (Fiedler, 1971). This interpretation is also congruent with Lanzetta's (1972) work on leader behavior under stress. However, because of its isolation from the personality and interpersonal influences research, and the intractability of its constructs, this interpretation to date has not been directly tested and, therefore, has not been validated.

The value of any theory is, in part, determined by the ability of its constructs to generate new hypotheses and to extend its explanatory value. If Fiedler's Contingency Model is to do this, the meaning of LPC must be established empirically and related to the larger body of research in the areas of personality and interpersonal influences. This paper attempts to support an interpretation of LPC which is parsimonious, related to a larger body of research, and which suggests some new and interesting hypotheses.

In trying to understand why some people reliably describe their least preferred coworker more favorably than others we asked, naively: "Could it be that some people just have more positive, trusting, confident, and optimistic attitudes toward people in general, and that this predisposition is simply reflected in their LPC scores?" Wrightsman (1964) has shown that people differ in their beliefs about basic human nature. Some believe it to be positive, some negative, and others believe it to be neutral. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and McGrath (1962) found that an individual's membership in different cultural and socio-religious groups was related to his beliefs about basic human nature.

If one's LPC score is a reflection of one's confidence in human nature, it should be possible to relate LPC scores empirically to a direct measure

of confidence in human nature and in predictable ways to related measures. One such related measure is likely to be the degree of personal freedom that an individual in a position of relative power or influence would allow others to exercise. It may be assumed that one who has a great deal of confidence in human nature (i.e., feels that people are good, trustworthy, socially motivated, competent, etc.) will be more willing to permit people greater personal freedom and will be less likely to seek or exercise control over their activities. Thus, the LPC score should be related to measures of a person's willingness to permit personal freedom and to restrain the exercise of control.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. LPC is positively associated with a direct measure of confidence in human nature.

Hypothesis 2. LPC is positively associated with a willingness to endorse policies of personal freedom.

Hypothesis 3. LPC is negatively associated with a willingness to endorse policies of control.

Study I

Method

Twenty University of Washington students completed Fiedler's LPC scale and a measure of their confidence in human nature. Confidence in human nature was measured by a modified version of McGrath's (1962) scale, "Basic Nature of Man" scale, revised to eliminate religious connotations (see Appendix A). Scores on the scale indicate an S's position on a continuum of beliefs from 'human nature is inherently bad and cannot be changed,' to 'human nature is inherently good and cannot be changed.'

Results

The correlation between LPC and belief in human nature was .37 ($p < .005$, $df = 30$). A chi-square analysis was also performed. LPC was split into three levels on the basis of normative score distributions (Fiedler, 1979). The human nature scale was also divided into three levels based on the possibility of scores being positive, zero, or negative. The resulting 3 x 3 contingency table visually displays the relationship between LPC and confidence in human nature. Even though the sample size was small, the chi-square was significant and there was a moderate degree of association between LPC and confidence in human nature (see Table 1). The hypothesis that a person's LPC is positively related to his level of confidence in human nature was supported.

Insert Table 1 about here

Study II

Method

Study II was a replication of Study I, using the same instruments and procedures with 32 University of Washington students as respondents.

Results

The correlation between LPC and confidence in human nature was not significant. However, the mean LPC in Study II was found to be significantly higher than the mean of the established norm ($t = 4.45$, $p < .001$) indicating that an overrepresentation of high LPC and high confidence in human nature ratings could be responsible for an attenuation of the correlation coefficient. Support for this conclusion was found when the

with each of the 10 hypothetical policy statements concerning the degree to which youngsters should be controlled or permitted personal freedom while at park facilities.

The five items advocating some degree of control over youngsters in parks were summed to produce a "control" score, and the five items advocating personal freedom were summed to produce a "personal freedom" score. On the basis of the median score on each of these scales, Ss were divided into high and low "freedom" scorers, and high and low "control" scorers.

Results

A two-way analysis of variance was computed to determine the relationship between a person's "control" and "personal freedom" scores and his LPC score. Table 2 summarizes this analysis of variance.

Insert Table 2 about here

A significant main effect for "personal freedom" scores was obtained ($p < .01$). However, contrary to our expectations, no main effect was found for Ss' "control" scores, and there was no interaction effect between the "control" and "freedom" scores.

The relationships between Ss' "control" and "freedom" scores and their LPC scores are presented in Figure 1. The mean LPC score in each of the four conditions was as follows: low freedom-high control, 55.11 (N=10); high freedom-high control, 67.20 (N=10); low freedom-low control, 55.00 (N=10); high freedom-low control, 72.33 (N=9).

Insert Figure 1 about here

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance: Study III

Source	df	MS	F
Control Score (A)	1	37.69	.38
Freedom Score (B)	1	2054.33	8.96*
A x B	1	30.65	.22

*$p < .01$

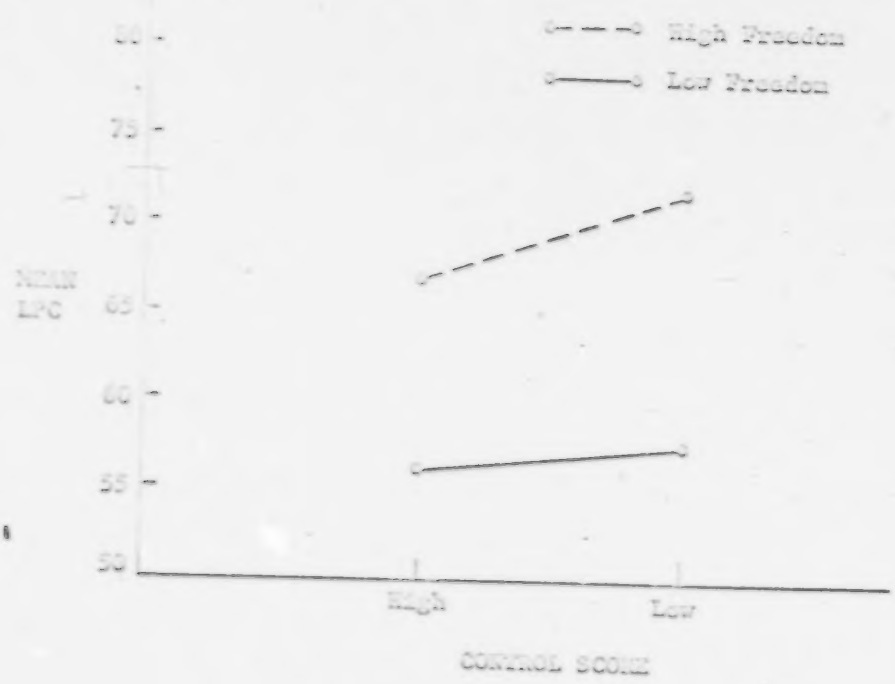

Figure 1

LPC Score as a Function of Freedom Score and Control Score (Study III)

[illegible] to establish a relationship between LPC and a person's willingness to endorse policies of rigid control--when a main effect for the freedom scale was found--could indicate one of two possible explanations. It was expected that freedom and control would be the opposite poles of the same dimension, and that Js who scored high on one scale would score low on the other. It may be, however, that a basic trust or confidence in people permits an easily generalizable application to real-life settings, whereas the application of rigid control is more influenced by the characteristics and practical parameters of a given situation. However, it should also be acknowledged that the scale was constructed on a rational--and not empirical--basis, and was designed for the population on which it was used. The failure to find a relationship between LPC and a willingness to endorse policies of rigid control, therefore, may have resulted from the scale construction and not from the lack of such a relationship.

This explanation has some support, as can be seen in Figure 1. Js in the high freedom-low control condition had the highest mean LPC, whereas Js in the low freedom-high control condition had the lowest mean LPC. This suggests that the control items begin to tap the expected relationship, but that the scale is not yet sufficiently refined. References to the actual scale items (see Appendix A) suggests that a lack of control items of the most extremity on the freedom items may account for the failure of the control scale to differentiate between Js. An effort must now be made to reconstruct and validate a scale which reliably discriminates between LPC scores on the basis of one's endorsement of both personal freedom and rigid personal control policies.

Discussion

It has been established that the LPC score is consistently related to a person's leadership effectiveness. However, failure to empirically interpret the LPC scale itself has limited its generalizability, as well as the power to explain the leadership process. The value of LPC in predicting leader effectiveness makes it essential to interpret and understand the nature of this dimension.

The present studies show the LPC score to be positively associated with a direct measure of confidence in human nature and as a derived measure of willingness to permit personal freedom. By replicating Stamp I and by the use of the tolerance-for-personal-freedom measure in a field setting, some support for an interpretation of LPC as a measure of a person's confidence in human nature was obtained. The authors view these findings as the beginnings of a nomological net, interpreting LPC as a personality construct organized around a basically positive-cognitive interpersonal bias. The present findings do not enable us to determine the relative merits of this interpretation of LPC as compared to the motivational construct interpretation. It would appear that interpreting LPC as confidence in human nature could provide a more parsimonious personality construct. A critical test between the two interpretations would be highly desirable.

Implications for Future Research

The implications of interpreting LPC as a measure of confidence in human nature may be two-fold: (1) understanding the leadership process within the Contingency Model, and (2) relating leadership style to the current literature on interpersonal influences.

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Fletcher

APPENDIX A

Human Nature

What is the basic nature of man? Is he inherently good or bad, both of these, or neither? Whatever his basic nature, can it be changed by human efforts, or is it unchangeable?

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number on each of the following scales.

1. Human nature is inherently bad and cannot be changed.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

2. Human nature is inherently bad, but can be changed.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

3. Human nature is inherently neither good nor bad; man becomes good or bad by the way he leads his life.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

4. Human nature is neither good nor bad--the concepts of good and bad are not applicable for describing human nature.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

5. Human nature is inherently good, but can be changed.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

6. Human nature is inherently good and cannot be changed.

   Strongly agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number on the following scales.

In the school that young people spend their free time in parks and recreational areas, it is important to have these areas be places:

1. Where youngsters will be taught to get along together in a civilized manner.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

2. Where youngsters let off steam in some constructive activity.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

3. Where youngsters will be taught sportsmanship.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

4. Where youngsters will be well supervised and kept out of trouble.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

5. Where youngsters will be taught our society's moral values (e.g., good from bad, right from wrong, fair from unfair, etc.).

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

6. Where youngsters will have a chance to explore friendships and activities which may not be offered at home.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

7. Where youngsters will have a chance to explore friendships and activities which may not be permitted at home.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

8. Where youngsters will meet all kinds of people.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

9. Where youngsters will be free to experiment with life and decide which of society's values they feel they should accept and which they should reject.

   Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree

10. Where youngsters will be free to learn what kind of person they want to be.

    Strongly agree 5 4 3 2 1 Strongly disagree